

[fourteen] the facility in the mountains

NOVA SAT BESIDE PETER'S unconscious body, trying to get him to wake up. Whatever had been done to them had lasting effects, because no matter how much Nova tried, she couldn't get any of them to wake up. Through the windows of the chopper, Nova could see mountains stretching out before them, feeling worry pool in her stomach.

"Our father," Kurt whispered, eyes closed as he prayed. "Hold me in the light of God..."

"It should've been me," Scott said, his voice hoarse. "He was the one that was gonna do something with his life. He was always the one."

"That's not how he felt," Jean said. "He felt that you were the one that was gonna do something special with your life. That you were gonna make a difference in the world. Maybe even change it."

"How do you know what he felt?" Scott asked.

"I know what everybody feels," Jean replied, reaching for Scott's hand.

Kurt continued praying quietly, and Scott looked at Nova, who was sitting by Peter's feet with her hand resting on his leg. "You know, I didn't think he was real."

"Who?" she asked, glancing up at him.

"Peter," Scott replied. "When Jean told me, I thought she was kidding."

"Yeah, a lot of people do," Nova replied. "But, uh, he's real."

"See, I told you," Jean said. "They've been together for, like, ten years."

"Whoa, really?" Scott asked.

"If you go by actual years," Nova replied. "Really it only feels like we've been together for a couple of months at most, because we don't see each other that often."

"Is it not hard?" Scott asked. "The distance?"

"Sometimes, yeah," Nova nodded, glancing over at Peter. "But seeing him makes it all worth it and I never really knew any different."

Jean smiled as she heard Nova's thoughts swirling around in her head. "You really love him, don't you?"

Nova nodded. "Yeah. Yeah, I do."

The chopper shuddered and began its descent. Jean looked around. "We're dropping."

"We need to be ready," Nova said. "As soon as that door opens, you hide us, okay?" Jean nodded. "And if anything happens, let me handle it, understood?"

The three teenagers nodded and Jean said, "We'll let you handle it."

"Good," Nova replied. "We save our friends, then we find my dad."

—

Peter groaned as he came to, lying on a hard metal floor. When his eyes opened, he saw Hank in front of him, only he was in his Beast form. Whatever medication he used to control his ability had seemingly worn out after being knocked unconscious, and when Peter saw him lying across from him, he let out a yelp and scrambled to his feet.

"What?" everyone asked in surprise.

"What's wrong with you?" Peter asked Hank, examining his own hands. "Is that gonna happen to all of us?"

Hank groaned. "No, I just left my meds in the house."

"What happened?" Moira asked. "Where are we?"

"Hey," Raven called. "Hey!"

The man above them spoke. "Hello, Mystique."

"Major Stryker," she greeted coldly.

"Colonel Stryker," he corrected. "I wouldn't get too close to the wall if I were you. It may create some discomfort."

Moira stepped forwards. "I'm Moira MacTaggart. I'm a senior officer at the CIA."

"I know who you are, Agent MacTaggart," Stryker replied.

"You cannot keep me here, in this," Moira replied.

"Actually, I can," Stryker replied. "A psychic event just destroyed every nuke from here to Moscow. That event emanated from exactly where we found you, at the home of the world's most powerful psychic. So, you are going to tell me: where is Charles Xavier?"

"It's not him you should be worried about," Moira said. "There's someone else. Someone more powerful."

"If you let us out of here, we can help you," Raven said.

"Do you really expect me to believe that?" Stryker asked. "You can put on any face that you want, but I know who you are. What you are."

He walked away from the glass above them, and Hank turned to Moira. "Hey, Moira. Um, what did you mean when you said someone more powerful than Charles?"

She didn't answer.

Peter approached Raven. "You know him? Magneto?"

"I used to," she replied. "Not so sure anymore."

"What was he like?" Peter asked. "Was he, uh... like they say he was? Was he... the bad guy?"

"No," Raven replied. "I mean, yeah, he was... Why do you care so much? You see his speech on TV or something?"

"Yeah, but, uh..." Peter cleared his throat. "He's my father."

Raven's eyes widened comically. "What?"

"Him and my mom, they did it—"

"Yeah, I know," Raven cut in. "But... are you sure?"

"Yeah," Peter nodded. "Yeah, yeah, he left my mom before I was born. I met him ten years back, around the same time I met Nova, but I didn't know it was him. By the time I figured it out, it was too late.

Then, this week, I saw him on TV again and I came to that house, looking for him, but by the time I got there... late again. You know, for a guy who moves as fast as me, I always seem to be too late."

"Let's hope not this time," Raven said.

"Yeah," Peter nodded. "The only thing I actually got right was Nova."

Raven smiled. "Yeah, she seems happier."

"She does?" Peter asked. "I mean, I don't see her much, but she's always happy when she's with me."

"That's what she means," Hank said, rolling his eyes at how oblivious Peter was. "She's happier because of you."

"Really?" Peter asked. "That's awesome."

"Hear me, inhabitants of this world."

"What is that?" Peter asked, looking around in confusion.

"This is a message."

"I think it's the professor," Hank replied.

"A message to every man, woman and mutant in the world. You have lost your way, but I have returned. The day of reckoning is here. All your buildings, all of your towers and temples, will fall, and the dawn of a new age will rise, for there is nothing you can do to stop what is coming. This message is for one reason alone: to tell the strongest among you, those with the greatest power... protect those without. That's my message to the world."

"How was Charles doing that without Cerebro?" Hank asked.

Someone banged on the glass above them and Stryker appeared. "I know that voice. It's Xavier, isn't it? What's going on?"

"We don't know," Raven replied.

"We don't know, bro!" Peter echoed.

An alarm started blaring above them, and Peter looked up in confusion as those watching them from the windows above disappeared from view.

"What are they doing?" Moira asked.

"What's going on?" Hank asked.

"Hey!" Raven shouted, trying to get someone's attention.

Above them, they heard shouting, followed by gunfire. People were screaming above them, and when someone crashed into the glass, the four prisoners watched in horror as the scene above them unfolded. They couldn't see exactly what was happening, but the shouts from the men above were enough to tell them that, whatever it was, it wasn't good.

When the screaming stopped, a familiar figure appeared above them, and Hank tilted his head in surprise. "Kurt?"

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